

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 139134
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TAGS: SOPN, CG

SUBJECT: ZAIRE IN U.S. PRESS

1. JUNE 1 EDITION OF WASHINGTON POST CARRIES ARTICLE
PAGE A 16 BY MURREY MARDER ENTITLED "BELGIAN SEES NO CON-
CLUSIVE PROOF ON CUBAN ZAIRE ROLE". EXCERPTS FOLLOW:

QUOTE: BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTER HENRI SIMONET CAUTIONED
YESTERDAY THAT THE WESTERN POWERS MUST NOT SLIDE INTO "AN
OVERSIMPLIFIED CONFRONTATION BETWEEN EAST AND WEST" IN
THEIR DRIVE TO COUNTER SOVIET-CUBAN PENETRATION OF AFRICA.

HIS NATION, WHICH REGARDS ITSELF AS THE MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE
IN THE WEST ABOUT ZAIRE -- THE FORMER BELGIAN CONGO --
SIMONET SAID, HAS NOT YET FOUND ANY WHOLLY CONCLUSIVE EVI-
DENCE OF CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE RECENT MILITARY THRUST
INTO ZAIRE'S SHABA PROVINCE BY REBELS BASED IN ANGOLA.

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IN AN INTERVIEW YESTERDAY WITH THE WASHINGTON POST, SIMONET
SAID THAT BELGIUM HAS "A GREAT CONCERN" ABOUT THE EXPAN-

DING SOVIET-CUBAN ROLE IN AFRICA. "BUT THE FACT THAT THERE

IS A CONCERN," HE SAID, "MUSTN'T BRING US TO THE POINT
WHERE THE CONCERN OVERSHADOWS ALL OUR THINKING ABOUT THE

PROBLEMS."

ASKED TO GIVE HIS CURRENT ASSESSMENT OF THE DEGREE OF
CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE SHABA RAID,.....SIMONET REPLIED:

"IT'S VERY DIFFICULT TO ASSESS. I HAVE CONTRADICTORY
REPORTS. I'VE BEEN TRYING TO CHECK THEM BUT WHEN YOU TRY
TO DIG INTO WHAT PEOPLE SAY THEN YOU REALIZE HOW FRAGILE
SOME OF THE EVIDENCE IS."

SIMONET WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE CUBAN FORCES (BY AMERICAN
ESTIMATES THERE ARE 20,000 CUBAN TROOPS IN ANGOLA) "COULD
HAVE TRAINED THE KATANGESE REFUGEES AND REBELS" IN THE
PAST. BELGIAN OFFICIALS SAY THAT THERE ARE ABOUT 250,000
KATANGESE LIVING IN ANGOLA, REFUGEES FROM THE UNSUCCESSFUL
ATTEMPT NEARLY A GENERATION AGO TO ESTABLISH A SEPARATE
KATANGAN NATION IN WHAT IS NOW CALLED SHABA PROVINCE.

SIMONET SAID, HOWEVER, "BUT...I MUST BE EXTREMELY CAU-
TIOUS" ABOUT "THE TIMING" OF CUBAN TRAINING OF EX-
KATANGESE GENDARMES, AS THE MILITARY FACTION OF THE
KATANGESE REFUGEES ARE CALLED. THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION
INSISTS THAT CUBANS TRAINED KATANGESE "RECENTLY," AND THAT
TRAINING IS A CRITICAL PORTION OF THE U.S. ACCUSATIONS
INVOLVING THE SOVIET-CUBAN RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CROSS-
BORDER ATTACK.
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PAGE 03 STATE 139134

SIMONET SAID "YOU SHOULD NEVER FORGET THAT THESE LUNDAS
(THE TRIBAL IDENTITY OF THE KATANGA GENDARMES) ARE AGAINST
THE PRESENT REGIME IN ANGOLA." (SOME SOURCES DISPUTE
THIS.)

"AND," HE CONTINUED, "I GATHER THAT AT SOME TIME" THE PRE-
SENT PRO-MARXIST GOVERNMENT OF ANGOLA, LED BY AGOSTINHO
NETO, "MUST THINK OF WHAT DAMAGE THEY WOULD INFLICT ON
THEMSELVES BY HEAVILY ARMING AND TRAINING PEOPLE THAT
COULD FIGHT AGAINST THEMSELVES.

"SO I'VE NO CONCLUSIVE PROOF OF THE CUBAN INVOLVEMENT.
THERE IS A LIKELIHOOD THAT AT SOME STAGE THEY HELPED, BUT
I WOULD BE UNABLE TO PUT IT IN VERY CLEAR-CUT AND WELL-
DEFINED TERMS WHICH WOULD NOT BE OPEN TO QUESTION OR TO
CONTENTION."

AT THE SAME TIME, SIMONET SAID THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT
"THE SOVIETS ARE TRYING, IT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME, TO GET

A FOOTHOLD IN AFRICA. AND THEY'RE TRYING TO EXPLOIT ANY

OPPORTUNITY "PROVIDED BY POLITICAL INSTABILITY, ECONOMIC INSTABILITY. BUT," HE ADDED, "I COULDN'T GO BEYOND THAT FOR THE TIME BEING."

"FIRST OF ALL, I DON'T BELIEVE VERY MUCH IN 'DESTABILIZING,' IN THE SENSE THAT YOU COULD BRING HAVOC" TO A NATION THAT IS OTHERWISE STABLE.

"SECONDLY," SIMONET SAID IN THE INTERVIEW YESTERDAY, "I DO NOT THINK THERE IS ANY SENSE IN TRYING TO BUILD UP THE REACTION OF THE WEST IN REGARD TO THE SITUATION OF ZAIRE" THROUGH "A VERY OVER-SIMPLIFIED CONFRONTATION BETWEEN EAST AND WEST."

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PAGE 04 STATE 139134

HE SAID, "I'M DEEPLY CONVINCED THAT MOST OF THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE ZAIRIAN PREDICAMENT LIE IN ZAIRE ITSELF AND IN SOME SURROUNDING COUNTRIES..." CORRECTING THAT PROBLEM, SIMONET SAID, SHOULD BE THE REAL CORE OF WESTERN AND, ABOVE ALL, AFRICAN CONCERN.

SIMONET STRESSED THAT BELGIAN CONCERN ABOUT THE CUBAN PRESENCE IN AFRICA IS CONSIDERABLE. BUT HE EXPLAINED THAT BELGIUM HAS CHOSEN, OUT OF ITS OWN COLONIAL EXPERIENCE IN AFRICA, TO PURSUE WHAT IT REGARDS AS A MORE EFFECTIVE POLICY THAN SOME OTHER NATIONS. BELGIUM, HE SAID, MAINTAINS A DIPLOMATIC MISSION IN ANGOLA BECAUSE "MY PREOCCUPATION AS A BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTER IS NOT TO MAKE THE MISTAKE OF FORCING THEM (THE PRESENT SOVIET-CUBAN SUPPORTED LEADERS OF ANGOLA) TO STAY IN THEIR PRESENT RELATIONS WITH THE CUBANS."

"THE BEST WAY TO CREATE AN ENEMY," HE SAID FIRMLY, "IS TO LABEL HIM AS AN ENEMY -- AND TO GIVE HIM THE IMPRESSION THAT THE WEST DOESN'T WANT TO TALK TO HIM."

CREATION OF A WESTERN-SUPPORTED "PAN-AFRICAN FORCE," SIMONET SAID, SEEMS TO US THE ONLY WAY OUT." SUCH A FORCE, HE SAID, COULD ESTABLISH A MILITARY SHIELD FOR ZAIRE, WHILE THE WESTERN NATIONS HELP TO OVERHAUL THE BASIC ADMINISTRATIVE AND ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF ZAIRE, WHICH HE SAID IS DEBILITATED BY CORRUPTION AND INADEQUATE TECHNICAL SKILLS. UNQUOTE

2. DECLASSIFY UPON RECEIPT. VANCE

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QUOTE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE STATE 139134

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PAGE 02 STATE 139134

INTO ZAIRE'S SHABA PROVINCE BY REBELS BASED IN ANGOLA.

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INVOLVING THE SOVIET-CUBAN RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CROSS-BORDER ATTACK.

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"AND," HE CONTINUED, "I GATHER THAT AT SOME TIME" THE PRESENT PRO-MARXIST GOVERNMENT OF ANGOLA, LED BY AGOSTINHO NETO, "MUST THINK OF WHAT DAMAGE THEY WOULD INFLICT ON THEMSELVES BY HEAVILY ARMING AND TRAINING PEOPLE THAT COULD FIGHT AGAINST THEMSELVES.

"SO I'VE NO CONCLUSIVE PROOF OF THE CUBAN INVOLVEMENT. THERE IS A LIKELIHOOD THAT AT SOME STAGE THEY HELPED, BUT I WOULD BE UNABLE TO PUT IT IN VERY CLEAR-CUT AND WELL-DEFINED TERMS WHICH WOULD NOT BE OPEN TO QUESTION OR TO

CONTENTION."

AT THE SAME TIME, SIMONET SAID THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT
"THE SOVIETS ARE TRYING, IT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME, TO GET

A Foothold in Africa. And they're trying to exploit any
opportunity "provided by political instability, economic
instability. But," he added, "I couldn't go beyond that
for the time being."

"First of all, I don't believe very much in 'destabili-
zing,' in the sense that you could bring havoc" to a nation
that is otherwise stable.

"Secondly," Simonet said in the interview yesterday, "I
do not think there is any sense in trying to build up the
reaction of the West in regard to the situation of Zaire"
through "a very over-simplified confrontation between East
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PAGE 04 STATE 139134

AND WEST."

He said, "I'm deeply convinced that most of the essential
elements of the Zairian predicament lie in Zaire itself
and in some surrounding countries..." Correcting that
problem, Simonet said, should be the real core of Western
and, above all, African concern.

Simonet stressed that Belgian concern about the Cuban
presence in Africa is considerable. But he explained that
Belgium has chosen, out of its own colonial experience in
Africa, to pursue what it regards as a more effective
policy than some other nations. Belgium, he said, main-
tains a diplomatic mission in Angola because "my preoccu-
pation as a Belgian foreign minister is not to make the
mistake of forcing them (the present Soviet-Cuban support-
ed leaders of Angola) to stay in their present relations
with the Cubans."

"The best way to create an enemy," he said firmly, "is to
label him as an enemy -- and to give him the impression
that the West doesn't want to talk to him."

Creation of a Western-supported "Pan-African force,"
Simonet said, seems to us the only way out." Such a force,
he said, could establish a military shield for Zaire,
while the Western nations help to overhaul the basic
administrative and economic structure of Zaire, which he
said is debilitated by corruption and inadequate technical
skills. UNQUOTE

2. DECLASSIFY UPON RECEIPT. VANCE UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

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Status: NATIVE
Subject: ZAIRE IN U.S. PRESS
TAGS: SOPN, CG, UR, CU
To: KINSHASA
Type: TE
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